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Nabal's Apology
FOR
Uncharitableneſs Examined.
A
SERMON
Preach'd before the Right Honourable the
Lord Mayor,
The Honourable the
COURT of ALDERMEN.
WITH THE
Governours of the HOSPITALS
OF THE
CITY of *LONDON*.
On *Wedneſday* in *Eaſter*-Week, at St. *Bridget's*
Church, being the 15*th* of *April*, 1696.

By *RICHARD LUCAS*, D.D.
Vicar of St. *Stephen's Coleman-ſtreet.*

LONDON:
Printed for *S. Smith* and *B. Walford* at the *Prince's Arms* it S. *Paul's*
Church-yard. 1696.

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Nabal's Apology

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WITH THE

Governours of the HOSPITALS

OF THE

CITY of LONDON.

On Wednesday in Easter-Week, at St. Bridget's Church, being the 14th of April, 1696.

By RICHARD LUCAS, D.D.

Vicar of St. Stephen's Coleman-street.

LONDON:

Printed for S. Smith and B. Walford at the Prince's Arms at S. Paul's Church-yard. 1696.

1 Sam. XXV. 10, 11.

And Nabal *answer'd* Davids *Servants, and said, Who is* David? *and who is the Son of* Jesse? *There be many Servants now adays that break away every man from his Master. Shall I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it to men whom I know not whence they be?*

THE *Occasion* of these words was this: *David* being reduc'd to the want of Necessaries in the Wilderness, sends ten Servants to *Nabal* with this Message, *v.* 6,7,8. *And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine House, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy Shepherds which were with us, we hurt 'em not, neither was their ought missing unto them all the while they were in* Carmel. *Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee: wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: (for we come in a good day) give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy Ser-*

 vants,

vants, and to thy Son David. The Petition, you ſee, is from one in *ſtreights* to one in *proſperity*. The Matter of it is modeſt and reaſonable: *give, I pray thee, whatſoever cometh to thine hand*, the plaineſt of thy Proviſion, what thou canſt ſpare from thy ſtate and ſtore: For I expect not thou ſhouldſt diminiſh the glory of thy Entertainment, or retrench any thing from the Mirth, the Joy, or Luxury of thy Gueſts to ſupply our Wants. The *grounds* of the Requeſt are clear and ſtrong; For beſides the general Obligation which Proſperity lays upon all Men to ſuccour the Diſtreſs'd and Needy, *David* had a more particular and immediate Title to the Charity and Munificence of *Nabal*. For when his *Servants*, and his *Flocks* were in his power, he had not only abſtain'd from the leaſt wrong and violence towards either, *himſelf*, which was no ſmall curteſie in *Military* Men: but had been a ſecurity and guard to 'em againſt that of all *others*. So that *Nabal* was bound in Juſtice as well as Generoſity, in Gratitude as well as Charity, to have given *David* a gracious and obliging Anſwer. Eſpecially when we add to all, that this Petition of *David* was made with all the decent Inſinuation and Addreſs imaginable. Thus ſhall ye ſay to the great Man, *Peace be both to thee*, &c. *behold we come unto thee in a good day; let the young men*

men find favour in thine eyes; give I pray thee unto thy Servants and unto thy Son David. To this *Petition* who cou'd have expected the *Anſwer* in my Text? an Anſwer wherein I cannot tell which to condemn moſt; the Sordidneſs, or the Pride, the Inſolence, or the Folly, the Ingratitude, or the Inhumanity, of it. And *Nabal anſwer'd*, &c.

In theſe words I ſhall conſider two things,

1. The *Perſons* concern'd in 'em, The *Supplicant* and the *Refuſer*, *And* Nabal *anſwer'd* David's *Servants*.
2. *Nabal's Apology* for his Uncharitableneſs, *Who is* David? *and who is the Son of* Jeſſe? *There be many Servants now adays*, &c.

I. Of the *Supplicant* or *Petitioner*.

This was *David*; *David*, whoſe leaſt Title was to be the Son of *Jeſſe*. He was the Son-in-law of *King Saul*, and by God's appointment Heir of the Kingdom. But what was more than all this together, he was a good Man, and a Prophet; *a Man after God's own heart*. I will not mention the Comlineſs of his Perſon, the Greatneſs of his Mind, the Accompliſhments of his Education, or the Brightneſs of his Natural Parts. I will not inſiſt on his Love of his Country, or his celebra-

ted Friendſhip for *Jonathan*: I'll not praiſe his Courage, or Conduct in the Field; nor his Experience, or Sufficiency in Councel, or Civil Affairs: nor will I take notice what his Merit towards the Publick was; or how far the Peace and Glory of his Country was owing to his ſingle Vertue. I will only ſay, That neither Prophane nor Sacred Hiſtory ever afforded a nobler Subject for *Panegyrick* than *David*. But this is not my buſineſs: all that belongs to me to obſerve here is, that *David* was *ſuch* a one, that a Man who had the leaſt Zeal for God, or for his Country; who had any Notion of Vertue or Honour; who had, in a word, any Soul, or any Senſe, wou'd have thought it one of the moſt fortunate Accidents of his Life and Crown, and the Perfection of his Proſperity, to have ſeen *David* his *Supplicant*, and to have found himſelf in a Condition to *oblige* him. But *Nabal*, whoſe Character I muſt give you *next*, was a ſtranger to all good and honourable qualities, and was not to be moved by any Conſiderations; tho' ſuch as wou'd have commanded the utmoſt Aſſiſtance from any but himſelf. If we look upon him in his *Fortune*, he is repreſented as a *rich* and *great* Man, *v.* 2. *Now there was a Man in* Maon, *whoſe poſſeſſions were in* Carmel; *and the Man was very great, and he had* 3000 *ſheep*

ſheep and 1000 *goats.* This was a part of his Wealth, to which, no doubt, all the *reſt*, his Lands, his Herds of Cattle, his Houſes, his Servants, his Money, bare proportion. *David*, as conſiderable as he was, either with reſpect to the glory of his paſt actions, the juſtice and greatneſs of his future hopes, or the ſtrength which he then commanded, addreſs'd himſelf to him with great humility, as to a *great* Man: *Thus ſhall ye ſay to him that liveth in proſperity; peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine houſe*, &c. *v.* 6. and then *v.* 8. *Let the young men find favour in thine eyes: give, I pray thee, whatſoever cometh to thine hand, unto thy Servants, and to thy Son* David. Thus far the Man makes a very *goodly* figure, and commands ſome ſort of regard from the World: for in *that* and *this* and *every* Age the World bows down to Wealth and Greatneſs, and ever will. But if we come a little nearer to him; if we view him more cloſely in his *Nature* and his *Morals*, we ſhall find this *Idol* of the *World* juſt ſuch another thing as an *Idol* of the *Egyptians*: ev'ry thing *about* him full of ſtate and worſhip; but *himſelf*, a Monky, a Crocodile, or ſome other the moſt contemptible of Creatures. Such a thing, I ſay, is *Nabal* in *himſelf*: for how gawdy and glittering ſoever his *Fortune* were, Luxury and Riot, and yet Sordidneſs and

Inhu-

Inhumanity; Vanity and Oſtentation, and yet Sowrneſs and Churliſhneſs; in one word, Wilfulneſs and Pride, Self-love, Sottiſhneſs and Folly, make up his *Character*; and Shame and Deformity conſtitute the very *eſſence* of his Soul. All which I might *infer* from this ſingle action of his, his *Anſwer* to the *Requeſt* of *David*; and that at a *time* when his Soul, if ever capable of it, might have been preſum'd, enlarg'd and ſet free from Cares and Covetouſneſs, from Moroſeneſs and Churliſhneſs. For 'tis ſaid, *v.* 36. *He held a Feaſt in his Houſe like the Feaſt of a King; and his heart was merry within him.* But we need not form our judgment of him by *Inferences*. His *Wife* and his *Servants*, who certainly knew him beſt, give us a very wretched account of him. A *Servant* giving his *Miſtreſs* a Relation of what paſt between *him* and *David's* young men, concludes it with this very ſevere Reflection, *Our Maſter is ſuch a Son of* Belial, *that a Man cannot ſpeak to him*, v. 17. And his *Wife* repreſents him to *David*, as a Man not worth his anger; telling him, that *Nabal* in all he had done, had but acted like *himſelf*: and that he might as well be angry with an Aſs for braying, or a Cur for ſnarling, as with *Nabal* for Ingratitude, Sordidneſs or Railing. *Let not my Lord, I pray thee, regard this Man of Belial, even* Nabal:

for

for as is his NAME, ſo is he; *NABAL is his* Name, *and FOLLY is with him*, v. 25. Having thus impartially repreſented *David* and *Nabal*, give me leave to make two or three *Reflections* on their different Characters and Fortunes: which may I hope, in ſome meaſure, contribute to promote the *deſign* of *this* Solemnity.

Firſt then, I believe there is not a wealthy Perſon *preſent*, who wou'd not account it an honour, a happineſs to be a Patron and Benefactor to *ſuch* a Supplicant as *David*; and yet, I doubt, many may prove deaf and impregnable to whatever I can ſay in behalf of *thoſe* for whom I plead *this day*. This, I muſt tell you, is a groſs miſtake. The *Cauſe* of *Charity* is ever honourable and important, whatever the *Supplicant* be. The Safety of our Country, the Honour of Religion, and the Salvation of Souls, have a great intereſt in our Alms. Charity, as it is the *greateſt*, ſo is it the *lovelieſt* of all the Vertues of the Goſpel: and by conſequence, as nothing adds greater *luſtre* and *ornament* to our Religion, ſo nothing is more apt to reconcile *Sinners* to an *Eſteem* for it, or to prevail with *God* to *preſerve* both it and us. If *this* don't prove what I aim at, I muſt carry the matter a little *further*; and tell you, that *thoſe* towards whom I implore your Bowels of Compaſſion, are

greater

greater than *David*; they are *Chriſtians*, *Diſciples of* Jeſus, *the Children of* God, *and Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven*: and being ſo, you will not be ſurpriz'd at my Aſſertion, when you call to mind the words of our *Saviour* concerning *John the Baptiſt*, Matt. 11. 11. *Verily I ſay unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not riſen a greater than* John the Baptiſt: *notwithſtanding he that is the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven, is greater than he*---. And yet I muſt advance a little *higher ſtill*, and put you in mind, that ſo cloſe is the union betwixt *Chriſt*, and his poor needy *Members*, that *they* ſuſtain *his* Perſon, and in *them* you confer your Alms upon *him*. This is the plain Doctrine of our *Maſter*, *Mat.* 25. for there he tells us, that when *he* ſhall appear in the glory of his *Father*, with his *holy Angels*, at the laſt day, and all Nations ſhall be gather'd before him, he *ſhall* ſay unto the *Righteous*, *Come ye bleſſed of my* Father, *inherit the Kingdom prepar'd for you from the foundation of the World: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink; I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was ſick, and ye viſited me; I was in priſon, and ye came to me. Then ſhall the* Righteous *anſwer him, ſaying, Lord, when ſaw we* thee *an hungred, and fed thee? or thirſty,*

thirſty, and gave thee drink? when ſaw we thee *a ſtranger, and took thee in? or when ſaw we* thee *naked, and clothed thee? or when ſaw we* thee *ſick, or in priſon, and came unto thee? And the* King *ſhall anſwer, and ſay unto them, Verily, I ſay unto you, inaſmuch as ye have done it unto* one *of the* leaſt *of* theſe *my* Brethren, *ye have done it unto* me.

This being ſo, the *Argument* by which *David* endeavour'd to move *Nabal*, that he had been *a guard, and a wall about all that he had*, and that *other* ſoft Inſinuation, *give, I pray thee, unto thy Servants, and unto thy Son* David, fall infinitely ſhort of *thoſe* which every poor *Chriſtian* has a right to make *uſe* of: Give to *him*, who has redeem'd, who has preſerv'd, not thy *Subſtance*, but thy *Soul:* give to *him*, who lov'd thee, and died for thee, that he might *reſcue* thee from the captivity and bondage of the *Devil*, from the Corruptions of thy *Nature* and the Wrath of *God*; and *reſtore* thee to his Favour, to the Vertue, and the Glory, to the Liberty and Immortality of the *Sons of God.* And indeed every *Chriſtian* does, in effect, attack thee with all *theſe* paſſionate *Arguments*, as often as he makes known his Neceſſities to thee, and importunes thy Compaſſion by our *common Chriſtianity*, and the *Name* of our *common Redeemer.*

I'll leave thee to consider, what guilt thou dost contract, as often as thou dost scornfully and imperiously, barbarously, or uncharitably, reject *his* Petitions.

My *next* Reflection shall be founded on the Character of *Nabal*, and 'tis *this*: That *want* of *Charity* is, generally, an *Argument* of *want* of true *Sense*, as well as of true *Religion* and *Vertue*. 'Tis an *Argument* of *want* of *Sense*; for no part of a rich man's Fortune is so advantageously employ'd, as that which is laid out in *Charity*. The *meaner* sort of People are *a wall and a guard* about the *wealthier*, either in their Persons or their Prayers: and the Tenderness of the Rich to the Poor is an Obligation, not only on those that *want*, but on those that are most *liable* to do so; on all who are next *related* to them, either in Fortune, or Nature. So that the Service and Affection of our *Neighbour*, our *own* Honour and Security, are never so certainly and cheaply purchas'd, as by our *Charity*. That *Uncharitableness* is, *next*, an *Argument* of *want* of all true *Religion* and *Vertue*, is plainer *yet*. For the Covetous and Uncharitable have, like *Nabal*, neither Honour, nor Gratitude; neither Faith in *God*, nor Kindness for *Man*: no Zeal for *Publick Good*, nor Compassion for *Private Misery*.

All

All their Aims, all their Kindneſs, all their Paſſion, center in *themſelves*: ſo that we are not to wonder if *this ſort* of Sinners be contemned by *Man* and abhorr'd by *God*.

Laſtly, From *David*'s being reduc'd to *Diſtreſs*, and *Nabal*'s living in *Proſperity*, I *infer*, that *Abundance* is no *Honour*; nor *Poverty* a *Diſparagement* to any Man. For ſometimes the Man of Underſtanding and Vertue may be brought low, when the Wicked may ſnort and wallow in his Proſperity. *For the Race is not to the ſwift, nor the Battle to the ſtrong; neither yet bread to the wiſe; nor yet riches to men of underſtanding; nor yet favour to men of skill: but time and chance happeth to them all*, Eccleſ. 9. 11. This I have remark't, not to ſtir up *Rudeneſs*, or *Impudence* in the Poor towards the Rich; for that wou'd overthrow all Order and Diſtinction: but to diſſwade the Rich from carrying it *inſolently* towards the Poor; by putting them in mind, that this *difference of Fortune* is too ſlight and inconſiderable a thing, to raiſe the true value of any Man, or to puff him up with an arrogant Opinion of himſelf, and contempt of others. Were *this Notion* well ſettled in the World, it wou'd ſoon introduce a more generous *Charity*. For one great, if not chief Reaſon, that makes Men

fond of *Riches* is, that, as they think, it ſets 'em far *above* their Neighbour, and makes 'em far *greater* and more *conſiderable* than others. Were this Fancy once throughly reform'd, 'tis eaſie to ſee that there wou'd be no great need of *Abundance*; and that Men wou'd chooſe rather to be *Wiſe* and *Holy*, than *Rich*: to do *much Good*, rather than lay up *much Money*.

II. The *next* thing to be conſider'd is *Nabal's Apology*. This may be reduc'd to three Heads:

1. Propriety; *Shall I then take* my *bread*, *and* my *water*, *and* my *fleſh*, &c.
2. Inability; *That I have kill'd for my ſhearers*, *&c.*
3. The Demerit and Unworthineſs of *David*, and his Followers: *and give it unto men whom I know not whence they bee? Who is* David? *and who is the Son of* Jeſſe? *There be many Servants now adays, that break away every man from his Maſter, &c.*

1. Propriety; *Shall I take my fleſh*, &c. which is as much as if he ſhould have ſaid, What is *mine* I'll keep for *my ſelf*, for my *own* need and for my *own ſervice*: let *David* take care for *himſelf*, as I have

have done. This *Plea* implies two remarkable *Errors:* (1.) That what we *give* another we *loſe* our ſelves. (2.) That our *Propriety* in our Eſtates *bars* all Claims and Pretenſions of the Poor. As to the *firſt*, If what we give be really loſt; If our Alms be ſown in the Sand, and while we relieve *anothers* needy Fortune, we impoveriſh or diminiſh our *own*; what becomes of the *truth* of *God?* where is the faithfulneſs of his Promiſes? What do all *theſe* Aſſurances, which God has given us, of Protecting and Bleſſing, of Enriching and Rewarding the Liberal and Bountiful, ſignifie? *Caſt thy bread upon the waters, and thou ſhalt find it after many days,* Eccleſ. 11. 1. *He that hath pity on the poor lendeth to the Lord; and that which he hath given him, will he pay him again,* Prov. 19.17. *The liberal ſhall be made fat; and he that watereth ſhall be watered alſo himſelf,* Prov. 11. 25. *He hath diſperſed, he hath given to the poor: his righteouſneſs endureth for ever: his horn ſhall be exalted with honour,* Pſal. 112. 9. What ſhou'd I multiply *Texts?* they are almoſt innumerable, containing a large *Charter*, both of Spiritual and Temporal Bleſſings, made over to him who gives Alms, and ſuccours the Diſtreſſed. I hope there are none here ſo much *Infidels*, as either to doubt, whether

ther these *Texts* be really *God's Word*, or whether *God* will be as *good* as his *word*.

2. This *Plea* implies that the *Poor* man has no right, no claim to any share of what is *ours*. But *this* is utterly false *too*: and to convince you of it, I desire you only to consider how you came by your Wealth. Will you deny it to be the gift of God? will you indeed arrogantly pretend that it is owing only to your selves? You cannot forget that it was a high Provocation in *Israel*, when they ascribed their Houses and their Vineyards to their own Prowess and Merit; when they forgot *GOD*, and said, *my* own *Arm, and my* own *Power hath got me this Wealth*; and remembred not that it is *God* that gives Man *power to get wealth*. But if indeed you do believe that you *have nothing that you have not received*, that you owe all you have to the Providence and Bounty of God, then, I suppose, you will not think it unreasonable that God shou'd *charge* those *Estates* he gives you, with what *Annuities*, *Pensions*, or *Reservations*, he thinks fit: and he has thought fit, that the *Poor* shou'd be provided for out of the Revenues of the *Rich*. This he has so often declar'd in his *Word*, that none of you can be ignorant of it. The *Poor* then has as good a *Title* to *his share*, as the

the *Rich* has to *his*: A *Title* deriv'd immediately from the Univerſal Donor, or Supream Proprietor: whence it is, that he who refuſes him this, is ſaid, by *Solomon*, to *withhold good from him to whom it is due*, Prov. 3. 27. Let me therefore beſeech ſuch as are *Rich in this world*, that you correct this Notion; that you look not hereafter on your ſelves as *Maſters* only, but *Truſtees* alſo: not as *Proprietors* only, but *Stewards* too in the Family of God upon Earth: and that you remember that you are deeply concern'd in that Declaration of our *Lord*, Matth. 24. 45. Who *then is a faithful and wiſe ſervant, whom his Lord hath made Ruler of his houſhold to give them meat in due ſeaſon? Bleſſed is that ſervant whom his Lord when he cometh ſhall find ſo doing: Verily, I ſay unto you, that he ſhall make him Ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil ſervant ſhall ſay in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and ſhall begin to ſmite his fellow-ſervants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that ſervant ſhall come in a day that he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not ware of; and ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the Hypocrites: there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth.* If theſe things were well laid to heart;

if

if men were really convinc'd that the *Poor* have a *right* to Relief from the *Rich*; that *Riches* are *Talents* committed by God to us, not to be waſted on our Luſts, Fancies and Humours, or laid up in a Napkin, but to be imploy'd for the glory of God, and the good of Man; and that of this we ſhall ſuddenly give an account: if theſe things, I ſay, were well weigh'd, *Riches* wou'd create in us *Sollicitude*, not *Confidence*. For we ſhou'd ſee our *Obligations* to do good encreas'd with our *Capacity*: and that the greater *Truſt* God repoſes in us, the greater *Account* have we to give: and the Effect of this wou'd be, we ſhou'd think *diſperſing* wiſely *abroad*, our greateſt *gain*; and *doing good* the greateſt *Advantage* and trueſt *Enjoyment* of Wealth.

2. *Nabal's* next pretence is *Inability*. And there being no Colour for this in his *Fortune*, which was great and opulent, he pleads his *Occaſions*. The *Number* of thoſe he was to *entertain* was *great*; his *proviſion*, whate're it was, was no more than *needed*; and therefore when his own wants or neceſſities were ſerv'd, he ſhou'd have nothing to ſpare: *ſhall I take my bread, and my fleſh, which I have kill'd for my*

my ſhearers? *Inability* is the moſt *general* Excuſe, and the moſt *eaſily* admitted: and this indifferently ariſes, either from a *Narrow Fortune*, or an Obligation to *great Expences*. Our neceſſary and unavoidable Charges; our making proviſion for our Children and Family; The narrowneſs of our Fortunes, Diſappointments, and Loſſes; *Theſe* are the *Topicks* which are always in the mouth of a *Miſer*. He *owns*, and unleſs he ſhou'd renounce, not only his *Chriſtianity*, but *Humanity* too, he cannot do *otherwiſe*, his *Obligation* to *Charity*; and therefore, though he may be aſham'd to do it in direct words, he pleads *Inſolvency*, and *Poverty*, or ſomething *tantamount*.

Againſt this I will oppoſe theſe two or three Conſiderations. (1.) This *Plea* reflects diſhonourably upon *God*; and ſeems to inſinuate that God does require a *Duty* of us, either *intolerable*, or *impoſſible*. (2.) 'Tis generally a *falſe* and *groundleſs* pretence. (3.) Where there is ſome colour of truth in it, it ſavours rankly of *Folly*, or *Infidelity*.

1. It carries in it a very unreaſonable *Reflection* upon *God*. God does not require of us to *ſtrip* our ſelves to *clothe the naked*, to *ſtarve* our ſelves to *feed the hungry*, to *burden* our

ſelves that *others may be eas'd*; nor, in a word, to *impoveriſh* our ſelves by our *Charity*. *David's* Requeſt was a very *modeſt* one: *We are come unto thee in a good day; give, I pray thee, thy Servants, and thy Son* David, *whatſoever comes to thy hand*: the gleanings of thy Vintage, and of thy Field, the ſprinklings of the Fountain; what thou canſt ſcarce ſpend without vanity or folly, and will not want when thou haſt given it. This is that which God is content with as an *Alms* to the Poor: And he that will not do *this*, or will not do it without *grumbling* or *murmuring*, muſt needs be concluded to have as little Honour for *God*, and value for *Heaven*, as he has Tenderneſs and Charity for his *Neighbour*. I do not here advance any Doctrine that can have the leaſt ill Influence upon the *Duty* I am recommending to you: I do not diſcourage any from the moſt generous Inſtances of an *Heroick Charity*. If any Man will chooſe to imitate the Bounty of the *Macedonians*, and be liberal, not only *according to his power, but beyond his power*: if anyman will imitate the Example of *Jeſus*, 2 Cor. 8. 9. *For ye know the grace of our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *that though he was* Rich, *yet for your ſakes he became* Poor, *that ye through his* Poverty *might become* Rich: If

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any man, I say, will come up to these *heights*, and transcribe the *Divinest* patterns of *Charity*, I do not doubt, but his Eminent *Grace*, will have as eminent a *Reward*: For *he that sows bountifully shall reap bountifully*. But all this notwithstanding, 'tis certain, that God will *accept* of *lower* degrees of *Charity*, and *reward* 'em too: that Scripture, as well as Reason, permits us to be deareſt to *our selves*; and allows our Charity to begin at *home*. This is evident from the general *Measures* God *prescribes* our *Charity*, which have a plain regard to our *Capacity*. *According as God hath prosper'd you*, says St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 16. 2. *According to the Ability which God giveth*, says St. *Peter*, 1 Pet. 4. 11. But *fuller* yet to my purpose, if any thing can be fuller, are the words of St. *Paul*, 2 Cor. 8. 12, 13, 14. *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not: for I mean not that other men be eas'd and you burden'd; but by an equality: that now at this time, your abundance may be a supply to their want; that their Abundance may be a Supply to your Want; that there may be an equality.* This is enough to shew, that the pretence of *Inability* or *Incapacity* is very frivolous, in the mouths of any that possess any measure of the

Goods of this World: since God requires nothing of any but according to his *Ability*; and weighs and estimates our *Charity*, not by the *value* of our *Alms*, but by the *readiness* and *cheerfulness* of our *Minds*. Let him, therefore, that cannot cast a *Talent* into the *Treasury*, cast in a *Shekel*; and let him that wants a *Shekel* cast in a *Mite*: *This* is *enough*, *this* will *satisfie* the commands of God.

2. This Pretence is generally *false*, and *groundless*. Whatever *Necessities*, *Occasions*, or *Losses* men may plead as a Dispensation from the Duty of *Alms*, their Refusals are *owing* wholly to the *Narrowness*, not of their *Fortunes*, but of their *Minds*. *Good men* never *want ability* to do good, and *ill men* always *do* or will always *pretend* they do. Even the *poor* Widow, when *pious* too, could find a *Mite* to cast into the *Treasury*: and the *poor Macedonians*, 2 Cor. 8. even in the midst of *Affliction* and *Poverty*, *abounded in the riches of Liberality*: but it was because they *abounded* in the *Joy of the Spirit* too. Though *churlish Nabal* had nothing to spare, yet *pious Abigail* could find a Present worthy of *David*, and her self, v. 18. *Then* Abigal *made haste*, *and took*

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two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five ſheep ready dreſt, and five meaſures of parch't corn, and an hundred cluſters of raiſons, and two hundred cakes of figs; and laid 'em upon Aſſes. But how hard is it to find the ſordid, and the ill-natur'd in *thoſe* Circumſtances, wherein they would judge themſelves *able* to give *Alms? Nabal*, when he could not part with his *Water* to *David*, cou'd find *Wine* enough to make *himſelf* and his *gueſts* drunk with. *That Nabal*, who deny'd *bread* and *fleſh* to *David*, and his Followers, at the ſame time *held a feaſt in his houſe, like the feaſt of a King*; and *treated* his Friends and Dependants even to *Riot* and *Luxury*. I would to God there were not too many *Examples* directly *parallel* to *this*, in *our* days, and in this *our* City. 'Tis a ſtrange piece of *diſingenuity* before *Man*, and *ingratitude* towards *God*, to plead *Inability* for *Charity*, when the ſtatelineſs of our Buildings, the richneſs of our Furniture, the coſtlineſs of our Attire, the Luxury of our Tables, and the Number of our Servants, publiſh and proclaim our Wealth. But I wou'd to God this were the worſt on't. What ſhame and confuſion ſhou'd I put ſome to, ſhou'd I go about to ſhew, *what* Pride and Oſtentation of Life coſt *ſome*, who

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at the ſame time deny all Relief to the Naked and Hungry? or *what* vaſt Sums many expend upon ſome vile and diſhonourable Luſt, while at the ſame time they are deaf to the Importunities of their Brothers Wants and Diſtreſſes? Good God! how dare ſuch as theſe profeſs *Chriſtianity*, who have utterly extinguiſh'd that *Charity*, which is the Life and Soul of it? what is this but to expoſe Religion, and mock God?

3. This Excuſe, where there is moſt colour for it, does yet ſavour rankly of *Folly*, or *Infidelity*. The two moſt plauſible *Grounds* for this pretence of *Inability*, are *Proviſion* for *Children*, and *Loſſes* and *Misfortunes*. (1.) *Proviſion* for *Children*. This ſounds well at firſt hearing: but when 'tis cloſely examin'd, 'tis but a miſerable ſhift. You are making *Proviſion* for your *Children*: I demand what to do? To live *Rich*, and *Great*, ſuitable to their *Birth* and *Rank*; to live as their *Parents* have done before 'em. Well, God knows how *well* this is; it may be like an *Epicuræan*, or a *Miſer*. Ah! how much better were it that the *Children* of *ſuch*, ſhould live *like Chriſtians*, in Modeſty and Sobriety, in Purity and Charity, in

in Meekneſs and Poverty of Spirit! Were *Religion* truly planted in the Souls of *Parents*, *this* wou'd be their Aim and Ambition for their *Children*. They wou'd train 'em up to Vertue, and to the Hopes of Heaven; for *this*, a *moderate* Proviſion wou'd ſerve turn. This would free the *Parent* from much trouble; the *Child* from many a Temptation; our *Religion* from diſhonour; and revive *Primitive Charity* once again in the World. But let us ſuppoſe, for once, that it be not only *lawful*, but *commendable*, to endeavour that our *Children* may be Rich after us: what *then*? is *Uncharitableneſs* the *way* to make 'em ſo? do we, then, indeed *rob* our *Children*, of whatever we *lend to the Lord*? does the *Unmercifulneſs* and the *Uncharitableneſs* of the *Parent* more certainly *enrich* the *Child*, than the *Bleſſing* of *God* does? and is the neglect or violation of the *greateſt Duty* in our Religion, the beſt Foundation to build the greatneſs of a *Family* on? Certainly, this is the Language of *Infidelity*, not the *Goſpel*. Were there no *Bleſſing* promis'd to *Charity*, *Uncharitableneſs* wou'd yet involve the Sinner in the guilt of *Inhumanity*: But ſince there *are*, and thoſe ſo *many*, and ſo *great*, to *what*, but *Unbelief*, muſt we impute it, when

a *Chriſtian* has not the Bowels of a *Pagan*? A ſecond Ground for the Plea of *Incapacity* is, great *Loſſes* and *Diſappointments*. I wiſh from my heart there were not ſo *juſt* a Reaſon for this kind of *Excuſe* at *this* day: but 'tis beyond diſpute, that the Wealth of the Nation muſt be extreamly Exhauſted by the croſs Accidents, and vaſt Expences of a long War: nor is it much to be wonder'd at, if the Detriment and Diminution of their *Fortunes*, oblige good Men to retrench a little from the *Bounty* and *Generoſity* of their *Charity*. And yet I cannot forbear obſerving to you, that the *preſent* ſtate of things calls for *greater* Degrees of *Charity* than ever. The *Reaſons* of this Opinion are very *plain*. (1.) The *Diſappointments* and *Loſſes* we meet with, if they operate kindly, ſhou'd the more effectually prevail with us to lay up our *Treaſures in Heaven*. For we ſee there's no *Security* for them or us upon *Earth*: whereas the Returns of our *pious* Projects, if they be ſincere, can never be intercepted by Fraud or Violence; nor can either War abroad or Conſpiracies at home defeat the *Succeſs*, or prevent the *Reward*, of our *Alms*. (2.) This is the beſt way to preſerve our *Nation*: our *Alms* may

may make ſome kind of Atonement for our *Sins*: they may avert the Diſpleaſure of *God* againſt us, and engage *Him* in our Patronage and Protection. This is a Doctrine founded in plain *Scripture*; which makes frequent *Promiſes* of Deliverance to the *Righteous* and *Charitable* Man. *The Liberal deviſeth liberal things; and by liberal things ſhall he ſtand*, Iſai. 32. 8. *Bleſſed is he that conſidereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. The Lord will preſerve him and keep him alive, and he ſhall be bleſſed upon the Earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his Enemies*, Pſal. 41. 1, 2. But *no* portion of Scripture is more *full* to this purpoſe, than *Pſalm* 112. from the *Beginning* to the *End*. There the *Righteous*, the *Good* Man is ſurrounded with Promiſes: Promiſes to *himſelf* and to his *Poſterity*: Promiſes of Wealth and Honour, of Deliverance, of Succeſs, and Victory. And it concludes, *The Wicked ſhall ſee it, and be grieved; he ſhall gnaſh with his teeth, and melt away: the deſire of the Wicked ſhall periſh.*

(3.) There was once a time when *Chriſtians* had *all things common; neither ſaid any one that the things he poſſeſs'd were his own*: and though

this heat of *Charity* ſoon cool'd, yet St. *Paul* ſeems to me to invite the *Corinthians* to ſomething very *like* it; and to inſinuate, that as often as great and preſſing *Neceſſities* require it, it is but reaſonable that a ſort of *Equality* ſhou'd be *re-eſtabliſht* among *Chriſtians*. And to *this* he *applies* the *Regulation* preſcrib'd by *God* to the *Iſraelites* in the Diſtribution of *Manna*, *according as it is written*, *He that had gather'd much had nothing over*, *and he that had gather'd little had no lack*, 2 Cor. 8. 15. Nor can this Doctrine ſeem ſtrange to any one who conſiders, that there is a cloſe *Conjunction* between *Chriſtians*; they are not only of the *ſame Family*, and *Heirs* of the *ſame Hopes*, but alſo *Members* of the *ſame Body*: that we are to live by *Faith*: and that whatever good we do *here* ſhall be *recompenc'd* us *hereafter a hundred fold*. Conſequently, that the great *Advantage* of *Riches* is, that by the right *Management* of 'em, we may make a good Proviſion *for the time to come*, *and lay hold on Eternal Life*. Now from all this together it manifeſtly follows, that the *Streights* and *Difficulties* of a Nation are ſo far from *cancelling*, or *weakening* the Bond of *Charity*, that they

they *ſtrengthen* and *enforce* it: and whatever encreaſes and multiplies the *Wants* and *Neceſſities* of a People, does alſo multiply their Obligations to *Mercy* and *Liberality*, and invite and preſs them to the moſt *eminent* Degrees of it. *Now* then if ever, the Nature of things requires, that we ſhou'd be *rich in good works*, *ready to diſtribute*, *willing to communicate*; that we ſhou'd have regard each to the *Wants* of *others*, rather than to our *own Intereſt*. *Now*, if ever, the Face of Affairs requires that we ſhou'd be of a *publick*, of a *tender* Spirit; that we ſhould not ſeek *great* things for *our ſelves*, but provide for the *common* Support and Tranquility, for the *common* Eaſe and Peace of our *Neighbours*. This is what the Love of *Jeſus*, the Love of our *Brother*, the Love of our *Country*, and the Deſire of a *Heaven* ſeems to me to demand of us *this day*.

I come now to the *laſt* part of *Nabal's Excuſe*,

III. The *Demerit* and *Unworthineſs* of the *Petitioners*. *Who is* David? *and who is the*

Son of Jesse? *There be many Servants now adays, That break away*, &c. *shall I take* my *bread*, &c. *and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?* This was, in few words, to tell 'em, that they were a Crew of Vagabonds, and idle Beggars, of Criminals and Malefactors; and that therefore it could not become an honest Man to countenance or support 'em. This, I confess, was home, and to the purpose: but it concerns not us. There are indeed in *this City*, and almost all the Parts of the Nation, too many, whose *Wants* are owing to their *Vices*, whose *Immorality* is more deplorable than their *Poverty*, and whom no Distresses or Judgments can deliver from their *Idleness*, *Sottishness*, and *Wickedness*. But what is this to us? I undertake not the Patronage of such as *these*, and much less of their *Vices*. Let the Apostles Rule be observ'd, *He that will not work, let him not eat*, 2 Thess. 3. 10. And again, *Tit.* 3. 14. *Let ours learn to maintain good works for necessary uses.* The *Excuse* of *Nabal* here, does not at all affect the *Cause* I have *undertook*. The *Hospitals*, whose Interest, whose Necessities, I recommend to you, have an Eye to

Piety

Piety, as well as *Charity*; to the Regulation of *Manners*, as well as the Relief of *Diſtreſſes*. *Here* no good Man can be *miſtaken* in the *Object*, or *abus'd* in the *Conveyance* or *Adminiſtration* of his *Alms*. *Here* the *End* is great and good; the *Management* faithful, diligent, and prudent; and the *Succeſs* anſwering all juſt and reaſonable Expectations. *They* are *truly* poor, *truly* miſerable and helpleſs, in behalf of *whom* I addreſs my *Petition* to all Rich and Wealthy Men *this day*. If we have any *Bowels of Compaſſion*, if we have any religious *Mercy* or *Tenderneſs* in us, certainly, the *Sick*, the *Wounded*, the *Maim'd*, the *Impotent*, the *Diſtracted*, and *needy Orphans* are a proper *Object* of it. 'Tis true, *Vagrants* and *Criminals* do here fall under our Care and Charity; but 'tis in order to their *Reformation* and *Recovery*. In ſhort, there is nothing in *theſe Hoſpitals* to be complain'd of, or regretted; but only *this*, that the Foundation is too *narrow* for the Superſtructure; that the *ſettled Income* is not ſufficient to defray the *Expences* neceſſary to carry on their Excellent Deſigns: That yet *even this* has been much diminiſht by the late dread-

dreadful *Fire*, and *other* ways: and, finally, that those *extraordinary* Supplies of *Charity*, by which these Foundations shou'd be *fed* and *nouriſht*, are too *few*, too *ſcanty*. *This* is the Reaſon (which I cannot mention without ſome *trouble*) that *Chriſt's-Church-Hoſpital* has *taken in* no Children theſe two laſt *Eaſters*; which was wont, if I remember my Information rightly, to take in *each Eaſter a hundred*, and *upwards*. The *many* and *great* Advantages which diſtreſs'd and helpleſs Children reap from *that Hoſpital*, do, methinks, beſpeak a *peculiar* regard for it. But I cannot run out into *Particulars*: 'tis time I ſhou'd come to an end.

To *ſumm* up all therefore in a word, *Charity*, as it is the moſt delightful in *it ſelf*, the moſt honourable in our *Religion*, and the moſt indiſpenſible and neceſſary of all the *Graces* of the *Goſpel*; ſo are we preſt to it by the moſt *numerous* and *powerful* Motives: Our Security and Proſperity on *Earth*; our Happineſs and Reward in *Heaven* depends upon it. Our *Obligation* to it, all *confeſs*; and none can do *otherwiſe*, unleſs they will diſclaim, not their *Chriſtianity* only, but *Humanity*

nity too. But yet ſtill, tis too too much *neglected*; and this *neglect* never wants its *Apologies*. I have therefore endeavoured to *prevent*, or *cut off* all *frivolous* Pretences; and to lay Men *open* to the Power and Influence of thoſe *Goſpel-Motives*, by which the *Spirit of God* does ſo earneſtly labour to plant, and cherish *this Vertue* throughout the World. Men may *pretend* what they will: but whoever is really *Uncharitable*, 'tis *Infidelity* or *Folly*, or ſome other *Vice*, that makes him ſo. We plead the *ſloth* and *looſeneſs* of *others*; when in the Bottom, 'tis our *own* Vice, not *theirs*, which ſhrinks up and hardens our *Hearts*, and contracts our *Hands*. We plead our *Inabilities*: but the Truth is, we do not want *Wealth*, but *Faith*. We would have every one take care for *themſelves*, as we have done for *our ſelves*: but we conſider not that this is the Language of *Self-love*, and *Arrogance*; that 'tis utterly irreconcilable with the *Charity*, or *Humility* of a *Chriſtian*. Let us then lay aſide all *Excuſes*; and let us ſhew the World, that we in good earneſt *believe* the *Goſpel*. Let us demonſtrate by our *Good Works*, that the *Spirit* of *Jeſus* rules in us; that the *Love* of *God* and *Jeſus*, and conſequently

quently of our *Brother*, is *shed abroad in our Hearts*. Let us act as becomes Men who *believe* a *Providence*, and a *Judgment* to come; who believe that *we shall receive according to what we do in the Body*: So let us resolve to live and dye in the practice of that *Charity* which is *profitable to all things*: *having the promise of the Life which now is, and of that which is to come.*

FINIS.